

## Message Text

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21

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SCCT-01 /058 W

----- 114136

R 231421Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8254

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 4104

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, CS, NU

SUBJECT: COSTA RICAN FSLN CAPTIVE PRODUCED

SUMMARY: NICARAGUAN SECURITY OFFICIALS PRODUCED A COSTA RICAN CITIZEN CHARGED WITH FSLN ACTIVITIES FOR A CONSULAR INTERVIEW THUS AVOIDING A STRAIN IN THE NICARAGUAN-COSTA RICAN BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. EMBASSY PLAYED A KEY, BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE IN THE CASE. END SUMMARY

1. NATIONAL GUARDS'S OFFICE OF NATIONAL SECURITY (OSN) PRODUCED FOR PUBLIC AND CONSULAR VIEW OCTOBER 21, AN ATTRACTIVE, 23 YEAR OLD COSTA RICAN CITIZEN NAMED LIANA BENAVIDES GRUTTER, WHO WAS ARRESTED ON OCTOBER 8 AND CHARGED WITH BEING A COURIER FOR THE LEFT-WING GUERRILLA ORGANIZATION, SANDINISTA NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (FSLN). THE EVENT WAS DULY COVERED WITH PICTURES AND TEXT IN THE SOMOZA-OWNED NOVEDADES.

2. THE TIMELY PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE CAPTURE OF MS. BENAVIDES AND HER APPARENTLY GOOD PHYSICAL CONDITION MAY  
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HAVE AVERTED A SERIOUS STRAIN ON NICARAGUAN-COSTA RICAN

RELATIONS. COSTA RICAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES JOAQUIN FERNANDEZ ALFARO APPROACHED US ON THE MORNING OF OCTOBER 21 AS A LAST RESORT IN HIS EFFORTS TO INTERVIEW MRS. BENAVIDES, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS THE SCION OF A WEALTHY AND POLITICALLY POWERFUL RANCHER IN PENAS BLANCAS. FERNANDEZ SAID HE HAD BEEN TURNED AWAY IN THE PAST 10 DAYS BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER, THE SECRETARY OF THE PRESIDENCY, NATIONAL GUARD INSPECTOR GENERAL JOSE R. ROMOZA AND OSN CHIEF GENERAL GENIE, EACH REFUSING TO COMMIT HIMSELF TO HELP ARRANGE THE INTERVIEW WITHOUT "HIGHER" AUTHORIZATION, OR TO BRING THE MATTER TO THE ATTENTION OF PRESIDENT SOMOZA. HE RELATED THAT HE HAD BEEN IN SAN JOSE THE WEEK BEFORE AND WAS INSTRUCTED PERSONALLY BY BOTH PRESIDENT ODUBER AND FOREIGN MINISTER FACIO TO VERIFY THE GIRL'S STATUS AND TO RESERVE ANY OFFICIAL PROTEST UNTIL ALL POSSIBILITIES WERE EXHAUSTED. FACIO TOLD HIM THAT IF THE GON FAILED TO CONCEDE A CONSULAR INTERVIEW AS REQUIRED BY THE VIENNA CONVENTION, THE GOCR WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO DENOUNCE THE CASE PUBLICLY. FERNANDEZ ALSO UNDERSTOOD THAT A UNIVERSITY SHUTDOWN AND DEMONSTRATIONS AT THE NICARAGUAN EMBASSY IN SAN JOSE WOULD OCCUR IF MS. BENAVIDES WERE NOT PRODUCED ALIVE AND WELL IN THE NEXT 24 HOURS. TO ADD TO HIS PROBLEM, THE COSTA RICAN AMBASSADOR-DISIGNATE ABUNDIO GUTIERREZ MATARITA, SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE THE NEXT DAY, WAS A PERSONAL FRIEND OF THE GIRL'S FATHER AND WOULD PROBABLY DELAY HIS ARRIVAL IF THE MATTER WERE NOT CLEARED UP.

3. AMBASSADOR AGREED TO USE HIS GOOD OFFICES TO GAIN AN INTERVIEW FOR FERNANDEZ WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA IN ORDER TO MAKE HIS CASE ON BEHALF OF THE PRESERVATION OF SMOOTH BILATERAL RELATIONS. APPRISED OF THE MATTER BY THE AMBASSADOR, PRESIDENT SOMOZA IMMEDIATELY PERCEIVED THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE MATTER AND GAVE ORDERS RESULTING IN A SMOOTH RESOLUTION OF THE CONTRETEMPS.

4. FERNANDEZ HAS BEEN LAVISH IN EXPRESSING HIS APPRECIATION OF THE EMBASSY'S EFFORTS TO ASSIST MM. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THE DIFFICULTIES THAT HIS EMBASSY HAS HAD HERE RECENTLY IN ATTEMPTING TO MAINTAIN A COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH NICARAGUA IN THE SECURITY FIELD DESPITE THE UNPOPULARITY OF THE SOMOZA REGIME AMONG MANY COSTA RICANS AND THE PRESENCE  
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OF A SIZABLE NUMBER OF DE FACTO NICARAGUAN EXILES IN COSTA RICA SEEKING WAYS TO UNSEAT SOMOZA. HE SOUGHT TO IMPRESS US WITH THE GOCR'S DESIRE TO AVOID BECOMING IDENTIFIED WITH THIS SENTIMENT AND WITH ITS POLICY OF RESPONDING TO MATTERS CONCERNING THE FSLN, WHETHER THEY INVOLVE NICARAGUANS REQUESTING ASYLUM OR COSTA RICANS HELPING THE GUERRILLAS, WITH THE ABSOLUTE MINIMUM OF SYMPATHY CONSISTENT WITH BASIC DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR RESPONSIBILITIES. AS PART OF THIS POLICY,

FERNANDEZ PREDICTED THAT HIS EMBASSY WILL DO NOTHING FURTHER  
TO ASSIST MS. BENAVIDES.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**TAGS:** PGOV, PFOR, CS, NU, FSLN, (BENAVIDES GRUTTER, LIANA)  
**To:** STATE SAN JOSE  
**Type:** TE  
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